



The ONYX *Informer*

Serving the African Diaspora Since 1972

Winter 2005



The Struggles of
YESTERDAY...TODAY...TOMORROW...

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Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City www.wikipedia.org

motivated



“Speak Now.”

In the summer of 1968 in Mexico City the Olympic gold and bronze medals for the 200-meter race hung on the necks of John Carlos and Tommie Smith respectively. As the Star Spangled Banner played in the background the two sprinters, who stood on the medal podium in black socks and no shoes, slowly closed their eyes, raised their black leather gloved fists and bowed their heads. Though their actions were simple and noiseless, the significance was heard around the world.

Impassioned and disappointed by the fact that the American civil rights movement had not completely eliminated the injustices suffered by those of the African diaspora, Tommie Smith and John Carlos felt they needed to do something. John's gloved left fist represented the unity in Black America while Tommie's right symbolized Black power. Together their raised arms were meant to form an arch of unity and power. They stood in black socks to signify the state of poverty endured by thousands of African Americans. Both also wore beads in remembrance of those who were lynched, killed, hung or thrown overboard during the middle passage.

The United States Olympic Committee suspended the athletes from the national team, stripped them of their medals, banned them from the Olympic Village and ordered them to leave Mexico City immediately. Once back in the states, the duo received threats on their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Many were enraged by the nonviolent demonstration because they felt that the Olympic Games was not an appropriate event for political statements. More than 30 years later that same sentiment was echoed on Friday, Sept. 2, 2005, during NBC's live Concert for Hurricane Relief telethon where rapper/producer Kanye West declared, "George Bush doesn't care about black people." While several agreed with Kanye, the next day various blogs and news sites voiced the opinions of those who felt that his actions were self-interested and tactless.

Perhaps televised events viewed by tens of thousands of people aren't preferred moments for America's social consciousness to be raised. But what is to be done when the frustration of continuously witnessing the inequalities of a racist society begins to dangerously swell up inside of you and arrives at its breaking point?

On October 17, 2005, San Jose State University unveiled a 20-foot fiberglass statue that captured the silent protest of its two alums on the 1968 Olympics' victory podium. The expressive fists of two young Black athletes will remain on San Jose's campus as a statement that if you wait until people want to hear the truth you'll wind up waiting forever.

Speak now.

Peace and Blessings
Kat Noel, Editor-in-Chief
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I've just been checked.

I have just been informed that I walk around with a sense of entitlement. At this point in my life I can not imagine a world where I would be denied access to a restaurant or a school because of the color of my skin. I always believed that this access was my natural right—but I've been checked.

Less than fifty years ago, I would be denied access to a restaurant and a school and a bathroom and the front seat on the bus. I would be told to my face that I couldn't have the same privileges as a white person. I would be told that, yes my skin color made me inferior and therefore all the abuse and maltreatment I faced is justified. I would be discriminated against openly and without consequence. I would be humiliated and abused and have no right to defend myself because I was less than human—I was colored.

The thought of this blows my mind. I can't even comprehend these injustices, but then I realized: somewhere down the line, I forgot why I have all these rights. I forgot that people before me risked their jobs, their homes, and even their lives to make sure that my generation and the ones after me would be able to further their education, sit anywhere they like, and never be denied services because of the color of their skin.

I'm guilty of feeling a sense of entitlement and forgetting about those who rallied, cried, demanded, and died for basic civil rights. We, as a generation, have become apathetic and complacent. We don't feel the urge to organize ourselves and fight against the subtle racism that we face—believing that racism is only saying the n-word. We believe that our grandparents have won all there is to win, but with our complacency, we are slowly but surely undoing all the years of blood, sweat and tears. Our apathy will be our demise.

Being an active participant is not just about demonstrations and rioting, but about educating yourself about your history, your heritage, your people—all that you should be proud of. Your history goes back to Africa, to the Americas, to the Caribbean and, most importantly, the people who have sustained the unrelenting evils and injustices brought against them so you and I and the generations after us could exercise our rights without consequence.

Those who know me are aware of my mind frame—I am unabashedly about revolution, but we all must remember that revolution starts within. We have to search deep within our minds and our souls to understand the bigger picture. We must have dialogues, meetings, organization, and, most importantly, a game plan. Nothing can be accomplished without a plan of action—a plan of action is what sparked the Civil Rights Movement and massive social reforms, not one isolated incident. Remember, it is up to us to teach our young by educating ourselves because, as has been proven time and time again, if I we don't do it, no one else will.

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Edutainment

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music

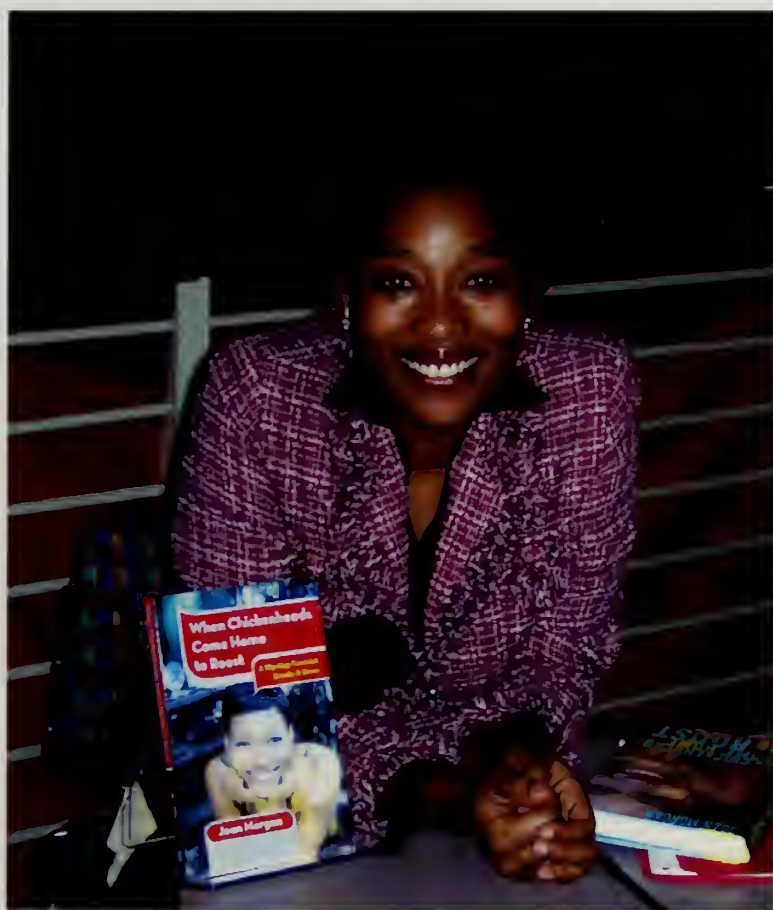
BOOKS

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When **TWO WORLDS** Collide

Ivelisse Sanchez



Joan Morgan At the Curry Student Center Ballroom, November 7, 2005

Joan Morgan is described as a feminist author, journalist and cultural critic. She is the author of the critically acclaimed book, “When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost.” In this book, she tackles the burden of being a feminist in the hip hop world. Morgan has been committed to documenting the evolution of hip hop and her personal struggles with the music that she loves so passionately. Throughout hip hop’s growth, she recounts her fight to proudly proclaim her womanhood in a world where women are often degraded as “fly girls,” “bitches” and “hoes.”

Image by Andrea Bizzolo

On Monday, Nov. 7, Joan Morgan approached the stage with an air of confidence and grace. Her hair was in its natural state, not quite reaching her neck. Her face was proud and her words were like poetry. It seemed not to matter that only about 20 people showed in a room that could hold up to 300. Morgan opened the night describing the journey that led her on the path of writing.

"I grew up immersed in hip hop culture," she said, slowly leading in to her self-confessed "almost love letter to hip hop." She went on to express her passion for the music, dance and fashion of the hip hop world. Morgan felt that after a brief explanation of her past, her love letter would be a good depiction of her thoughts and feelings of nearly 20 years ago. Beginning with "Dear Hip Hop," she proceeded to read her love letter. The melodic flow of her words made the audience forget that they were in a lecture and book reading. Instead, Morgan sounded like a poet in a dimly lit café with mellow grooves in the background. As she continued to illustrate the components of her soul one phrase was unforgettable...

"I'm like a slave to your rhythms..."

As the beginning of the letter portrayed a love that was just as real as it was deep, the rhythm of her speech became ridden with a mild undertone of frustration. The letter turned into a series of whys? She was seeking an explanation as to why she was so in love with the music but so betrayed by its lyrics.

"None of it explained why I stayed in such an abusive relationship... half of them [hip hop artists] act like it wasn't a woman who clothed and fed their asses... It's like I'm loving with a love that is as fierce as it is divided..." It was the repetitive bits of confusion that allowed the audience to understand why feminism and hip hop caused great tension in Morgan's life and often sparked serious debates about her claim to feminism.

Morgan explained that throughout her life she found it hard to separate feminism and hip hop. How could she love a music that was boldly degrading to women? Hip hop embodies a spirit where "women ain't shit" and are told so to their face. A woman's body is her prize possession, not her intelligence, style and grace. As Morgan described her journey into higher education, she revealed her sense of misgivings about the definition of feminism and who and what qualifies someone as a feminist.

It is very well known that college-level curricula that deal with the feminist movement deal with the White feminist movement and Morgan found what her mother said to be true, "White women's racism in the feminist movement excluded the masses," and that inextricably included Morgan. But it wasn't her ethnicity that made her yearn for something more fulfilling in the feminist world; it was her want for a feminism that "would allow us to explore ourselves as women, not victims." She described her frustration with the constant cry of victimization.

"Black women should no longer be defined by our accumulation of pain because defining ourselves by our victimization robs us of our beauty and of our depth," Morgan passionately explained. Although hip hop artists have degraded and victimized women of color, she feels this should be a gateway to open communication.

She said, "This is a perfect opportunity for an inter-racial and inter-class movement to talk about the portrayal of young women, regardless of race." Morgan believes that an open dialogue about the depiction of women in hip hop would be one of the most effective ways to create awareness and activism. She thinks hip hop is not simply a form of musical expression but a mirror as to what is going on in the Black community.

The discussion soon turned into a debate of hip hop in its current state and Morgan was open to discuss this with audience members. She was an active listener and an active participant proving that she is still passionate about hip hop culture. At 40 years old, Morgan has no shame in saying that she is not doing the same things she was doing at 25, but her age is not relevant. She is, in many ways, a musical historian who is documenting the phases and evolution of hip hop music.

Morgan believes she got hip hop at its best and says, "We've allowed this powerful and creative music from young Black and Latinos to lie out, wither and die on the vine of commercialism." Although looking back she wishes she had held hip hop more accountable for its content and undeniable influence over American youth, she feels keeping it real is what it's all about. Hip hop culture, its fans and its participants are all responsible for its content and image and Morgan urges that hip hop artists need to stop talking about how much they get paid and give the world something to think about.

Kaleema Nur, a first year Northeastern law student, said, "Other countries have gone back to the roots of what hip hop was originally about, like social protest..." and Morgan indicated that she agreed.

As time ran out, Morgan reiterated the importance of bringing hip hop, at least some of it, back to its roots. Not to dampen the mood, she ended the night on a positive note saying, "Hip hop has always been the voice of a people who have nothing but hip hop is like a tree with many branches. Although commercialism, sexism, racism and all the other -isms have poisoned the tree, its seeds have been spread all over the world."

This event was made possible by the Council for University Programs and was sponsored by the Student Activities Fee, NU Feminist Student Organization, NU XCEL, and the NU Hip Hop Studies Collective.

Have Ideas for our Edutainment section?
Send an e-mail to onyxsubmissions@yahoo.com
with Edutainment in the subject line.

Edutainment

A MODERN MINSTREL Show?

Candice Springer

Flashback. It's 1956. Nat King Cole, the sultry jazz singer becomes the first African American to host his own variety TV show on NBC. "The Nat King Cole Show" made television history and set the precedent for future black television shows to follow.

Fast-forward 12 years. The beautiful Diahann Carroll is on the set of NBC's "Julia" practicing her lines. Not only has she just become the first woman of color to be in the starring role of a sitcom, but her show has finally set work to abandoning the stereotypical image of black people (like the ones featured in the early 1950's on shows such as "Amos and Andy" and "Beulah.")

Of course, there was the precious 70's, where we met Fred and Lamont Sanford, repeated J.J.'s "Dyno-mite!" a hundred times, or watched as George and Wheezy Jefferson moved on up to the east side. These shows were profound in featuring, finally, the first all black casts, as well as not shying away from issues such as racial bigotry and poverty. They were powerful testaments to black television going in a positive direction.

Then came the 80's and with it, Bill Cosby. Sure, Mr. Cosby had been in plenty of television shows before, ("I Spy" and other shows proclaiming his name that never managed to appeal to a large black audience), but on September 20, 1984 all of that changed. NBC took another risk as they had when airing Nat King Cole's show in 1956. In 1984, NBC aired the pilot episode of "The Cosby Show." Not only did "The Cosby Show" save NBC, which was failing as a network, it revived the idea of the "situation comedy." No puns, no one-liners, and no obvious jokes, "The Cosby Show" found humor by simply portraying the life of a normal African American family.

However, there was also controversy. "A normal African American family? What's that?" is what echoed in the heads of many 1980's TV viewers. Could there possibly be a Heathcliff Huxtable in real life, who actually has a medical license? Is the idea of attorney Claire Huxtable just a fictitious facade or something any black woman could aspire to be? "The Cosby Show" definitely challenged notions of race and class in America. It also challenged black stereotypes by displaying a strong multigenerational family that had professional parents able to take care of their financial responsibilities, had friends from all walks of life, and a serious focus on the education and well-being of their children. "The Cosby Show" paved the way for the portrayal of real African Americans, capable of achieving success.

And so with that we turn our tour to the 1990's, where shows like ABC's "Family Matters" and NBC's "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" continued to display African Americans as having the potential to be anywhere and do anything. Strong father figures, happy families...you know what I'm getting at, right?

Welcome to 2005, the 21st century. Are you looking for black television? Just tune in to UPN, but don't necessarily expect to be able to identify with any of the characters.

movies
music
books
theater

TV

Image by LaDonna LaGuerre

If you look at the weekly primetime line-up of shows on UPN, the only shows that are not black sitcoms are "Veronica Mars" and "WWE Smackdown." UPN has clearly become known as "the black people's network." Why has this happened and what happened to black TV shows on every network? "The Bernie Mac Show" appears to be the only one that isn't found on UPN since "My Wife and Kids" was cancelled from the ABC line-up this year... and who even watches 'Bernie' anymore?

It just seems as if black TV is at a stalemate. Could it be that maybe we have nothing else left to prove? I highly doubt that. Though the shows on UPN are entertaining, especially the new "Everybody Hates Chris" and more familiar "Girlfriends," they don't capture the essence of shows from back in the day, or even more recent ones like "Moesha," which was the catalyst for black shows debuting on UPN. Yes, most of the characters are now successful and strong-willed, but why can't Joan ever keep a man on "Girlfriends," why is Kyla Pratt's character so domineering on "One on One," and how come I can't identify with any of the women portrayed on any of these shows?

This doesn't even begin to ask questions about black TV on cable television. BET seems to have lost its flavor now that it's no longer run by its former executives. Also, why is it that only recently kids' shows have been trying to appeal to larger demographics, such as "The Proud Family" on Disney or "Dora the Explorer" on Nickelodeon? Even adult cartoons such as "The Boondocks" are just beginning to air, though shows like "The Simpsons" and "Family Guy" have been on the scene for a while now.

It's hard to know where black television is headed. Getting quality shows to air has been an intense struggle for decades. But what can be done to keep this going? Sometimes we need to revisit the past before we can go on to successfully tackle the future—maybe that's what black television needs to do. If executives study the powerful history of the shows, the unwavering precedents they set, and the messages of strength and capability they provided, we could get back to where we need to be: rightfully portraying our people and their voice on every network for the entire world to see!

Edutainment

The **POWER** of Film Makieya Kamara

Genocide is defined as "the systematic and planned extermination of an entire national, racial, political, or ethnic group." But in one night I learned that a bunch of words explaining an action is nothing compared to the power of images.

"Sometimes in April" is a heart wrenching film about two brothers on opposite sides of the genocide in Rwanda. I think this is one of the most important "must see" films for all black people. The movie forces you to step out of your own life, your own troubles. You see exactly what genocide is—how it affects people and how it affects you.

Within the first day of the Rwandan genocide, about 8,000 people were slaughtered. This number did not just include the Tutsi; it included the Hutu Modernists who refused to surrender to the Hutu militia. Those participating in the killings were "normal people," as normal as you and me. They were priests, bishops, doctors and lawyers. They were husbands and wives—husbands would kill Tutsi wives and wives would kill Hutu husbands. By the 100th day, almost 1 million Rwandans had been exterminated, violently slaughtered, kidnapped, tortured and raped. Men, women, children, young and old were killed without discrimination. The hatred for "the other" was too ridden with rage. The only thing that mattered was a piece of paper displaying your affiliation—"Tutsi" or "Hutu."

"Sometimes in April" portrays the international response to the killings, or lack there of. Watching this film, it is obvious that getting their own people out was the first thing on the minds of the other countries. During a press conference scene in the film, it seemed as if the only thing the reporters were concerned about was "Are the Americans alright? What is being done to help them?"

This film makes you question everything—the government, their motives and their agenda. You can't help but wonder if they will help their people even if it brings them no benefit. Not only your heart will be opened but so will your eyes and your mind.

The knowledge gained and lessons learned through this movie are everlasting. I felt the movie was an eye-opener and I enjoyed it on more levels than one. The film is a step away from the world we know and from the "blockbuster" films featured in national movie theaters. The film's depth and breath-taking depiction of the Rwandan genocide will take you to a whole other level.

MOVIES

music

books

theater

tv

SOMETIMES in**APRIL**



www.fiba-filmbank.org



<http://images.nationmaster.com>

This event was made possible by Haitian Student Unity, a student organization on campus. The film was featured at afterHOURS on Nov. 28 and was preceded by a brief background discussion with Professor Kwamina Panford of the African American Studies Department.

“George Bush doesn’t care about
black people!”

– Kanye West, Hip Hop artist

Media (iN)SENSITIVITY 101

“If you wanted to reduce crime, you
could—if that were your sole pur-
pose—you could abort every black
baby in this country and your
crime rate would go down...
That would be an impossibly ridiculous
and morally reprehensible thing to do,
but your crime rate would go down.”

– William Bennett,
Former Secretary of Education

“... if you’re stupid enough to turn to
broke-ass college students for spare
change, maybe you deserve to be on
the street.”

– Justin Rebello, The NU News

Mayday, mayday!

There is an outbreak of
Tourettes in the media, black
babies, Arabs, George Bush,
homeless people...

RUN FOR COVER!

When Hurricane Katrina happened, she sent shockwaves of human tragedy throughout the country. In the post-Katrina frenzy, you couldn't escape the heartbreaking images of the aftermath. Nor could you escape the general insensitivity of the media coverage. As victims of Katrina's wrath fled to safety in the superdome, television anchors dubbed them "refugees". Refugees? The Merriam-Webster online definition of refugee is: one that flees; especially: a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution. The victims of Hurricane Katrina were Americans, yes the majority of them were poor and Black, but they were all Americans. The inaccurate and racist use of the word "refugee" to refer to the victims of the Hurricane began a domino effect of careless, media outbursts.

In a perfect world, national media would reflect the interests and diversity of the people it represents. However, this is not a perfect world and the media does not portray the majority of the people they are attempting to represent.

"If you look at the people who run news organizations, they tend to be pretty educated, elite and predominately white... But even when you have African American staff members on a newspaper or at a television station in a position of making decisions often they're coming from the elite economic groups, college educated that kind of thing," said Alan Schroeder, associate professor in the School of Journalism at Northeastern University, who has worked as a news reporter as well as television producer in Boston, Denver, Colorado, and Wichita Kansas. "...a lot of the people who work in the media are out of touch with big portions of their audience because they don't live like that, they have more money, they don't live in the same neighborhoods that were affected in New Orleans and that kind of thing."

In general, those who present the news are considerably disconnected from the people they are discussing. These people are oblivious to who is affected by the news. Furthermore, this disconnection often leads to insensitive, biased and often outright offensive news reporting.

During the Katrina catastrophe two different pictures were printed by Yahoo/Associated Press in two different news reports. In picture one; a white couple, chest high in flood water pulling bags behind them, the caption- residents FIND bread and soda in a grocery store. In picture two; there is a black man, chest high in flood water pulling a bag behind him, the caption- a young man after LOOTING a grocery store. Now, there were no grocery stores open for business during Hurricane Katrina. So who determines who is looting and who is finding? Who decides that a black man finding food after a catastrophe is looting while a white woman just got lucky?

"That brings it into a real sharp focus, the kinds of things that can happen when the story is being covered that is clearly racist. Whether it's a conscious or an unconscious attempt to be racist, it still is," said Schroeder. "So this story...brought out that potential for seeing those kinds of problems in a much bigger way than normally stories would have.

You saw it both in terms of the government's response to the problem and also in the media's response to covering the problem."

Post Katrina, Hip Hop artist Kanye West gave us all another reason to love live television. At the NBC live concert fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina, Mr. West showed us something a lot more revealing than Janet's wardrobe malfunction at the Super Bowl. West expressed his frustrations with the response time in New Orleans as well as the media portrayal of the tragedy:

"I hate the way they portray us in the media. You see a black family, it says, 'They're looting.' You see a white family, it says, 'They're looking for food.' And, you know, it's been five days [waiting for federal help] because most of the people are black," West said. "George Bush doesn't care about black people!"

After NBC News gained their composure backstage, they cut out the West Coast version West's slight tirade. Some say he went too far! He shifted attention from helping the victims to Bush bashing. Others say, he said what everybody else was thinking. Isn't that what real news is about? Tapping into the emotions and concerns of the people and discussing it? On the other hand, many people felt that West's outburst was just that- a bout of Tourette's with no follow through.

Professor Schroeder said, "...if you look at Bush's poll standing in the African American community its 2% approval, which is absurd that is just the lowest it could possibly be... I can understand why these comments get the attention that they do but I think that they kind of ignore the real problem."

West's outburst did one thing—got people talking. In a delayed attempt to grab some of the spotlight, "bad Hip Hop" poster child 50 Cent replied to West's comments stating: "I think people responded to it the best way they can. What Kanye West was saying, I don't know where that came from. The New Orleans disaster was meant to happen. It was an act of God." Riiiiiggghht.... kind of makes you wonder who's got 50 Cent in their pocket.

In other news, William Bennett, former Secretary of Education has uncovered what criminologists have been trying to figure out for centuries... how to reduce the crime rate. Apparently during his talk radio show, Salem Radio Network's Bill Bennett's Morning in America, he was discussing the book "Freakonomics" with a caller. The book attempts to make a correlation between the declining crime rates and the increase in abortions. When the caller disagreed with this correlation, this was Mr. Bennett's reply:

"Well, I don't think it is either, I don't think it is either, because first of all, there is just too much that you don't know. But I do know that it's true that if you wanted to reduce crime, you could -- if that were your sole purpose, you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down."

This is not an issue of free speech. Bennett is obviously protected and is free to express his own opinion. According to mediamatters.org, Bill Bennett's Morning in America airs on approximately 115 radio stations with an estimated weekly audience of 1.25 million listeners. The question is does William Bennett have a responsibility as a talk show host to be sensitive to his listeners?

"A lot of these talk show hosts specifically, their whole approach to their jobs is to be as outrageous and provocative as can be...they have a responsibility to their audience to be at least reasonable and fair in their comments and this one crossed such a line," said Schroeder. "The only good thing that comes out of it is that they do become very controversial that they are called to account."

In the world of talk radio where people catch snippets while changing stations, this can easily be accepted as factual if the listener did not catch Bennett's follow up statement: "That would be an impossibly ridiculous and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down."

When both Republicans and Democrats shook a disapproving finger at Bennett and the NAACP demanded an apology, he refused, stating that those who misinterpreted his statements are the ones who owe him an apology. In his defense, Bennett claims he was putting forward a hypothetical situation and that he is absolutely not a racist and has fought for educational equality for children. This is the same man who according to CNN.com was reported to have lost millions of dollars in Las Vegas and Atlantic City over the last decade. I can't help but to wonder where he found the time to fight for educational equality.

Switching gears from national to local news. Recently NU News has come under fire after a staff member wrote a column about the homeless people on Huntington Avenue. In the weekly All Hail column entitled "Spare some rage", Justin Rebello shared his thoughts on what he calls "the dregs of Western civilization." Rebello asserts in no uncertain terms his desire to kill the panhandlers who according to him wouldn't be missed anyway.

Throughout the column, Rebello berates and ridicules the assumed criminality and alcoholism of these individuals. "Every night, like clockwork, there was some degenerate standing there, wanting change, becoming more and more abrasive as the alcohol was leaving his system." Suggesting trading cards to represent homeless people, Rebello jokes, "I'll trade you the guy with the afro and the shaky hand for the guy with the flannel hat who kind of looks like my dad."

Now, assuming "the guy with the afro" is black, many argue this column was racist and the part about the guy looking like his dad is a feeble attempt to cover his ass. Calling this column racist is problematic in two ways: first, it is buying into the stereotype that all homeless people are black and that because the article is hateful against homeless people it also targets people of color.

Secondly, this shifts attention from the fact that poverty is not racist and devastates all races. This column is not racist but it does portray cruel, callous, elitist perceptions of people who, through life circumstances, become panhandlers. The right to free speech aside, what purpose does this column serve on a college newspaper? The ranting and ravings of this senior journalism major sound better suited to his journal than in the NU News. We all have gripes, but does everybody need to be exposed to them?

On their face, the action of this student in our campus newspaper is insensitive, irresponsible and just plain wrong. But the deeper and more disturbing issue here is that those involved in and running university media today are those that will be involved in and running local/national/international media tomorrow. Scared yet?

The media has a major influence on the national mood of the people. When Mr. Anchorman says the President has raised the terror level from yellow to red, people pay attention. When Mrs. Anchorwoman says Bird Flu is on the loose, people pay attention. Media matters! When the news media becomes infested with people who are detached, unconcerned and uneducated about the problems facing the people they are reporting on, the new outcome is biased, ignorant and discriminatory. News media national or university wide has a responsibility to their audience to present unbiased and accurate information. Although everyone is entitled to their opinion, it should not be presented as factual.

Words are powerful; print and television have always been used by the masses to organize, motivate, inspire and empower. The advent of television revolutionized the way information was presented. When used properly the images in the media have been used to spread powerful messages of protest, human suffering and rebellion as well stories of love, innovation and triumph. Unfortunately when put in the wrong hands this revolutionary tool becomes a weapon used to marginalize and oppress people it should be supporting and empowering. We cannot allow this to continue. If you feel you have been misrepresented, write a letter, make a phone call, spread the word, DO SOMETHING! It is our responsibility to hold the controllers of this weapon accountable for their offenses because if we don't, you can be certain the revolution will definitely NOT be televised!



SPOTLIGHT



Image by BriAnn Smith

The Great Teacher Inspires

Sophia Dauphin

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” –William Arthur Ward

When I think of a great and unforgettable teacher, I think of my high school African American English teacher Ms. Lena Hamilton. She is an educator that inspired me to become a teacher.

Ms. Hamilton did things for me that none of my other teachers did, like helping me with my college essays and applications. Though she was a single mother, she still found time to assist me and three other girls with the difficult process of applying to colleges. Ms. Hamilton even spent her weekends editing and proofreading my work. She showed me that she cared about my future; I can never forget all she did for me. She is more than an educator—she is my mentor and friend.

With Ms. Hamilton's constant motivation and William Arthur Ward's quotation in mind, I would like to share why I want to become an educator.

I am the fourth child of six siblings and see the struggles my parents go through to supply food, shelter, and clothing for us. They are hard working Haitian immigrants that provide all they can, even if that means not buying anything new for themselves. Witnessing what my parents faced made me question my teaching career.

Most people assume and believe that educators do not make enough money and are often stressed. I do not want to teach for the money, the recognition, or the summer vacations. I want to teach to inspire students to believe in their own intelligence and capabilities. I want to show them that their dreams and aspirations can come true if they put in time, effort, motivation and determination. I want them to see me as an example—a young Haitian American teacher who has completed high school, college, and graduate school because of all my hard work.

Teaching is not for everyone. It is a gift some have within them and I believe that I am one of those people. I love to work with young people, particularly people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Some think I am crazy for pursuing a career in teaching, especially at a high school level, but my desire to teach is powerful. I am passionate about my knowledge transferring to students, to provoke them to think. Teaching is not about making students memorizing and regurgitating information—it's truly helping them understanding and applying what they have learned into their personal lives.

I want to teach minority students, especially those living in the inner cities and urban areas. I believe that most, if not all, of these students can be taught, yet many Boston schools have performed poorly in standardized testing and have a high dropout rates. These facts are hurtful because some of these students represent my culture, my race, and me. They need qualified and trained teachers who care about, love, and appreciate their students, who have the desire to teach. Because I am aware of some of the issues in the urban educational system, I would like to teach within it. I know that it will not be an easy task—there will definitely be obstacles, ordeals and hurdles in my path but I know that through God, my perseverance, wisdom, patience and knowledge I will help as many students as possible with reaching their aspirations.

I would like to have personal relationships with my students, too. I want them to trust me and see me as someone who truly cares about them and their future. Just as Ms. Hamilton has helped me reach my goals in life, I would like to inspire my future students to hold fast to their dreams and make them into reality. I want them to see me as one who makes them think and encourages them to reach their full potential.

Hopefully my future students will not forget the name Ms. Dauphin as I will never forget Ms. Lena Hamilton.

“Teachers are expected to reach unattainable goals with inadequate tools. The miracle is that at times they accomplish this impossible task.” –Haim G. Ginott



Betre's Doin' the Damn Thing

Marsha White

Scheduling this interview was more than I expected. I spotted Betre Gizaw, a junior journalism major and student activist, seated at a table at the Onyx's SoulSpeech event. The event took place at the African American Institute on Wednesday, November 15, 2005. Betre greeted me with a charming smile and later in the month we sat in tiny room next to the Cabral Center and began our interview. We began with a quick biography.

Betre was born on July 4, 1984 and was raised in Brockton, Mass. His family is originally from Ethiopia. He attended a small Christian school from grades K-8 with a population of only 150 students and described the hardships he faced changing school environments.

"I had a big adjustment when I entered Brockton High," he said. "There were about 4000 students and a graduating class of 800... but, I had support from family and teachers."

So what brought this ambitious young man to Northeastern University? "Mainly because of co-op and it was close to home."

Since his time at Northeastern University, Betre has held numerous leadership roles and has been extremely active in the Northeastern community. Currently, he is the president of Brothas About Change (BAC), a group started four years ago "focused on interactive discussion among Black and Latino men about issues on campus and in the world." The members of BAC have also collaborated with a female spin-off, Sistah's Talkin.

One signature move that BAC sponsored was the Women of Distinction event which Betre described as "an opportunity to say 'Thank You!' to women on campus such as Dean Robinson, Sharon Hinton, Nadine Yaver and other affluent women at Northeastern." Putting on events for student groups isn't the only thing Betre participates in.

Betre volunteers at the Paul Robinson Institute for Positive Self Development run by the Concerned Black Men of Massachusetts on Saturday Mornings tutoring and mentoring young boys up to 18 years of age. He has also taken on the newly developed position of vice president for the Council of University Programs (CUP) Collaboration Chair. This collaboration chair was obtained after much controversy. In the spring of 2005, CUP announced that they were cutting the diversity chair from their council and this decision is what prompted student involvement. Betre described the situation and the student reaction to it.

"CUP is university programming and has a budget of \$200,000 and is responsible for bringing in celebrities, speakers, comedians, etc." Betre said. "In May, CUP made a decision to cut the Culture and Diversity chair... because they claimed that programming was already diverse." Outraged at CUP's elimination of this position, student leaders, e-board members and staff members, who called themselves "The Council," congregated to lay out a plan of action.

After tireless planning and weekly meetings, a letter was signed by most presidents of student organizations and was printed in the Northeastern News. The letter called for a meeting with CUP to develop a new position. "Out of struggle came the vice president of Collaboration," Betre said. It was designed to connect student groups with CUP and create collaboration." He explained that although they were limited by time, their success illustrated how effective people can be in a small group and what teamwork is.

He pointed out that it wasn't magic that brought forth this action but a team of organized and truly concerned individuals. Betre proudly reminded me that "[successfully] going up against administrators and staff show what Black people can achieve through hard work."

For all his accomplishments, Betre remains humble. Even looking at the title of this article, "Betre Doin the Damn Thing," he objects to being the focus of this project because he believes it was a group effort. And although he has accomplished many of his goals, Betre does not believe that the struggle is over.

He informed me that there should be more representation of students of colors in student government and university programming meetings. He thinks people who complain should do something about it. His last words of wisdom were, "We should bring people together and stay on the same page... we should support each other's events and work together as a team."

Betre is excited about the possibilities. He strongly feels that we need to understand we are all one people and by sticking together and connecting on one level, we will continue to persevere in the future. Betre truly is an amazing and inspiring individual. I hope that we take his advice to heart and try to promote unity among ourselves in order to help each other progress in life.

Our Cultural Responsibility



*Carl Mack at Cultural Responsibility 101
October 13, 2005 Image by Eric Esteves*

**Margaret
Kamara**

Before my interview with Carl Mack, I had exactly 30 minutes to prepare. He only had a few hours to spare until he began his lecture. Entitled Cultural Responsibility 101, Mack sought to give tips on achieving success and the importance of learning your history. The event was sponsored by the Northeastern chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the Black Engineering Student Society (BESS).

Carl Mack is currently the executive director of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). He is a great orator and passionate historian. He continues to travel to different educational facilities all over the U.S. to lecture students about cultural awareness and ways to succeed. Mack is very community-oriented and has made it his responsibility to encourage and educate Black youth. His past positions include serving as a mentor for students at various schools in the Seattle District and as student advisor of Renton High School Black Student Union.

In 2002, Mack was elected president of the King County Branch in Seattle, Wash. of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He has increased the membership of the branch from 600 to 2,000 and has transformed it into the number one branch in the country. He has also received recognition by the Greater Seattle Community as one of the 25 Most Influential People. Despite all his national and local achievements, I found out that there was a lot more to the Jackson, Miss. native than what appeared in fine print.

Intimidated by his accomplishments and nervous about the interview, I relaxed when Mack reassured me that he was an average guy. "On Friday nights I love it when it's raining and I can just watch movies and not go out at all," he said. "I can literally be in bed all weekend, and get up for work on Monday. I like waking up to my wife cooking grits, eggs and toast on Saturday mornings," he explained. As he opened every door we passed, pulled out and pushed in my chair and referred to his wife as the smartest woman ever, I began to wonder if he was always this wonderful. However, he says he is not trying to save the world, he is just "...doing his part...one bite at a time."

As the popular phrase goes, "Heroes are not born—they are made," and great men are made heroes by overcoming various hindrances that they've encountered in their lives. The same is true for Carl Mack. He told the audience his story—not just the happy times, but his trials and struggles.

"I grew up, it started with both parents. My dad drank a lot and was always fighting with my mama...I hated my father. [But] when I learned about the black experience, I began to forgive him and love him because experiences for black folks in this country were difficult, and for a black man even more difficult. My father may not have been the best man I wanted him to be, but he was the best man he could be. He died shortly after I made a full transformation into loving him and I miss him now."

After discussing his experience with his father, Mack began to talk about the love and respect he has for his mother. "My mother taught me to care for humanity," he said. "In my community, there was only one family with a husband and a wife. I know it was hard for such a vibrant sister like her [my mother] to sacrifice her womanhood because she had three boys to deal with. History drove me to respect Black women." Mack soon discovered his zeal for history and all the lessons that it brings.

"History has a way of maturing you and making you see things differently," he passionately explained. Mack feels it is important for Black youth to embrace their history and learn from it. And with this learning, he credits his success.

"All of our ancestors have laid a blueprint for us, and today we maximize it. Regardless of what you study, internalize your culture. No school ever told me that there was anything beautiful about being Black, so I accepted that 'til I started studying history. People keep Jesus Christ alive by studying the Bible: you must keep your history alive by studying it." After all, like the event says, it is our "cultural responsibility."



John Lewis: Living Legend

Margaret
Kamara

John Lewis at Retracing the Struggle October 30, 2005. Image by Marsha White

On Sunday, October 30th, 2005, five thousand people from various ethnic backgrounds, ages, genders and social statuses marched from Roxbury, Mass. to the Boston Commons in Downtown Boston to commemorate two historically significant civil rights marches. These marches, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., took place in 1965. The march from Salem, Ala. to Montgomery, Ala. protested the exclusion of black voters from the polls while the Roxbury to Boston Commons march sought to end segregation in Boston schools.

Before the march began, a ceremony was held at the Roxbury Baptist Church. The church also served as the meeting place prior to the march. Various Massachusetts politicians and other office seeking officials such as Sam Yoon, Felix D. Arroyo and mayoral candidate Maura Hennigan participated in the event. Speakers at the march included the 2004 presidential candidate and current U.S. Senator John F. Kerry, State Representative Byron Rushing, and Mayor Thomas M. Menino.

Although the most famous icon of the march was not present, the beloved and respected Dr. Martin Luther King, someone close to him who shared his dream and the fight for equal rights was. U.S. Representative John Lewis addressed the crowd but many of the attendees, particularly those of the younger generation, were unaware of his contributions as they raced to have their picture taken or to shake the hands of Kerry and the other politicians. It was clear that our generation needed a lesson in history as school textbooks are not achieving this. I am hoping this article will be a start.

John Lewis is described as "one of the most courageous persons the Civil Rights Movement ever produced" and is a living history book of the black struggle. He was born on February 21, 1940 outside of Troy, Alabama, son of sharecroppers. Growing up on a farm, attending segregated public schools, actively participating in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the powerful words of Dr. King inspired him to make the conscientious decision to be a part of the Civil Rights Movement. At 18, Lewis met Dr. King and they became friends. Two years later, Lewis became more involved and perceived politics as "...a means of bringing about change." As a student at Fisk University, John Lewis organized sit-in demonstrations at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee. At 23, he was involved in numerous civil rights programs. He was the chairman of a major civil rights group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the Freedom Rides. The first meeting was held with President Robert Kennedy in an office of the White House. "The Riders," as they were called for short, traveled through the South challenging segregation at interstate bus terminals. Lewis and the other Riders received constant death threats and on many occasions were severely beaten by angry mobs.

On March 7, 1965, John Lewis led over 600 marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala. to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the state. The march, is also known as "Bloody Sunday" because of the violent attack the demonstrators faced by State troopers. This is the march in which the October march here in Boston commemorated. By 1966, his final year as chairman of SNCC, he was arrested 24 times. In 1981, John Lewis was elected to his first official government office at Atlanta City Council member and in 1986 was elected to Congress where he is currently serving his seventh term.

I have only given an overview of how Congressman John Lewis was a militant in the Civil Rights Movement. He was involved in more events that I discussed and even today he continues fighting for equal rights in United States. He describes his mission to build a new America. He wants "...a different country, a better country." The signs I saw when I was growing up are gone and they will not return."

John Lewis should inspire our generation to take advantage of the living legends that are still here with us.

The Onyx REMEMBERS



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Life **Beyond** the Bus

Christine Williams

Most of us only know Rosa Parks one way. We envision a small, light-skinned black woman with glasses, who wouldn't give up her seat on a bus one day and changed the world. But, what about Rosa Parks, the person? What sorts of things did she enjoy? What was her life like before the bus incident and after the bus boycott? Did she ever get married or have kids? What did she do with the remainder of her life? This is the story they never told us about in elementary school—the story with which I will honor her memory now.

So let's start with the facts. Rosa Parks was born Rosa Louise McCauley on Feb. 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama. Following her parents' divorce, she moved to Montgomery, Alabama to live with her mother's family.

At age twenty, she married a young black man named Raymond Parks. Together they made a comfortable income—Raymond worked as a barber; Parks, a seamstress. In her spare time, Parks was politically active. She joined the Montgomery Voters League and Montgomery's NAACP chapter. By 1943, she was the chapter's secretary.

1955. We all know what happened. Parks took a "stand" by "sitting down" for her rights. The irony and significance escape none of us. However, most of us are not aware that Rosa Parks was not the first person who refused to give up her bus seat for white person. Nor, was she the first black woman to do so. In fact, earlier that year, a 15 year-old Black girl had been arrested for Park's very same act. What made Parks different was that she had the strength and support of her co-workers at the NAACP. She used the one phone call appointed to her at the jailhouse to call E.D. Nixon, one of the most prominent members of her NAACP chapter. He, in turn, called Clifford Durr, a liberal white lawyer who agreed to represent Rosa. After she consulted with Durr, her mother and her husband, Parks finally agreed to work with the NAACP and openly challenge the segregation law that had resulted in her arrest.

We all know the result of that contention. Parks' bravery and willingness to make herself a public figure sparked others to find a way to peacefully protest racist laws. As a result of her action, the legendary 381- day bus boycott began. This brought world prominence to Martin Luther King Jr. and resulted in the beginning of the end of the Jim Crow laws. However, Park's fame and recognition came with a price. Death threats and violent opposition began to equal her support. It was agreed that it was no longer safe for Rosa and her family to remain in Alabama so in 1957, she moved with her mother and husband to Detroit, Michigan.

In 1965, she received a job working for U.S. Congressional Representative John F. Conyers Jr. Time passed, and imminent physical threats diminished but Parks continued to face phone harassment. In 1977, the strain of harassment took its toll. Her husband, Raymond, had a nervous breakdown and later died. However Parks, remained a deeply devoted civil rights activist. Throughout the 80s, she worked to end apartheid in South Africa, and in 1987, after leaving her job with Conyers, she founded the "Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development" in honor of her husband. Today, others carry on her work. The Institute is still active and thriving, acting as a career counseling center for the area's black youth. In response to her recent death this October, the Institute has made it clear that her mission will not be derailed. In her words, Parks said: "Memories of our lives, our works, and our deeds will live on in the memory of others." The Onyx Informer thanks Rosa Parks for her dedication to empowering our people and changing the face of our nation.

To learn more about Rosa Parks, you can visit her official website at: <http://www.rosaparks.org/>



www.artistsnetwork.org

A Reflection of **Black** Experience

Ivelisse Sanchez

August Wilson was an extraordinary man. He is a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and the recipient of several other awards including a Tony Award and the Literary Lion Award from the New York Public Library. Wilson's best-known literary legacy is his ten-play cycle, which he began in the 1980s and completed this year before his death on Oct. 2nd. These plays, all set in different decades, chronicle the Black experience, both the negative and the positive, throughout the 20th century. Wilson's plays sought to let the world in on the struggles and triumphs of African-Americans from the 1920s through the present day. In an effort to honor the legacy of a truly gifted Black man, the Broadway Theatre in Virginia was renamed for him on Oct. 17, 2005.

August Wilson is the son of a German immigrant father and African-American mother. He is the fourth of six children and was raised primarily by his mother. Throughout Wilson's childhood, he was a victim of blatant racism and violence. In 1959 his mother remarried and relocated the family to a predominantly-White working class neighborhood where bricks were constantly thrown at his windows.

Wilson was the only Black student who attended Pittsburg Central High School in 1959 but overwhelming racial hostility made him leave. Wilson then attended Gladstone High School but dropped out in the 10th grade when a teacher accused him of plagiarizing a 20-page paper. Although Wilson was a high-school drop out, he continued to educate himself. He studied extensively at Carnegie Library and was eventually awarded a degree- the only such degree to be given by the library. At the age of 12, Wilson became enamored with Black writers and began studying the works of Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps and other influential African-American writers.

These authors inspired him to become a writer and fueled his passion to share his experiences, and the experiences of his people, with the world. His decision to be a writer proved to be a challenging one because Wilson's mother, Daisy, wanted him to become a lawyer. Wilson loved and respected his mother with all of his heart but refused to ignore his calling. He was kicked out of his house and joined the Army in 1962.

After working odd jobs for the next several years, Wilson finally realized his dream. In 1968, Wilson co-founded the Black Horizons Theater in the Hill District of Pittsburg, Penn. There he served as a scriptwriter and director for the next ten years.

August Wilson lived through the triumphs and struggles of being a Black man in America. Although a victim of racial hostility, he chose to release his frustrations through his plays. As a private man, little is known about his personal life and his feelings about his works. Although few interviews of him exist, he didn't have to say what he was feeling or what he thought because his plays were like windows- windows set wide open for the world to peer through. His legacy is undeniable and his works are extraordinarily influential. Wilson's plays are like mirrors, as you read you see yourself, you see your mother, and you see your brother. There are very few people in this world who have the talent to transcend racial and economic boundaries. Be proud to know that August Wilson, once a poor Black man, is one of them.

The week-old gray clouds parted, revealing a clear sun that shined just in time to welcome the buses of proud diasporic Africans as they descended on the nation's capital. Thousands gathered on Saturday, Oct. 15, 2005, to recognize the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March.

It was as though a massive black family reunion converged in the backyard of Capital Hill. While it was obvious that there were less of us than our last get-together ten years earlier, the vibes were still positive and productive. Kinfolk traveled far distances to reunite after a decade to discuss where we are today and share their issues of concern.

There were buttons, t-shirts and banners demanding reparations, callings for the freedom of the wrongfully imprisoned, declaring the need for peace in Haiti, asking to save our children from violence and begging that we respect our women.

Holland Raulston Brown came from Delaware to tell us about the unsolved murder of his 27-year-old son Holland Jr. and friend Marquita Smith, 19. He shared it was Minister Farrakhan who recommended bringing pictures of deceased loved ones to remind us that we lose too many too soon. Under a shaded tree sat a drumming circle that drew the attention of several with its inviting beat. Some simply swayed while others entered the circle and allowed the rhythm to inspire them. Inhibitions were gone because family surrounded us. Hands clapped in time encouraging more dancers to join the circle.

Fifteen-year-old Laquay Johnson was an obvious crowd favorite as she mixed traditional African moves with the Harlem shake and tootsie roll. A sophomore from Crockett Technical High School in Detroit, Michigan, Laquay came to the Millions More Movement to promote the organization, By Any Means Necessary (BAMN). She revealed it was her first time out of Detroit and she came because she wanted to make a difference.

Blankets were laid out as the young and old settled down to eat and hear the words of the event's several speakers. Singer Erykah Badu proclaimed that we forget we possess the power of thought and word, which can "propel us to the new world." From the steps of Capital Hill Erykah cried, "We've been in this spiritual warfare for thousands of years, A thousand years with ourselves." There were murmurs of agreement and respectful dissension.

President of the New Black Panther Party, Malik Zulu Shabazz, stirred up the crowd by professing that "the real gangster is in the White House." He emphatically inquired, "How you going to have a world terrorist and George Bush hasn't been arrested?" Shabazz also asked the assembly for the verdict Bush Jr. would receive if he was put on trial. A unified reply of "GUILTY!" rang out through the National Mall.

The events unsatisfied opinion of our president was so intensely heart felt that it made one wonder if our excessively coddled head of state knew or cared that thousands of this country's citizens gathered a few blocks from his home to voice our need for change.

Moved by the words of Malik Zulu Shabazz, the man of the hour, Minister Louis Farrakhan of The Nation of Islam, asked vocal artist India Arie if she would allow him to spoke before she performed. She agreed.

Although known for his controversial comments, Minister Farrakhan's words that Saturday afternoon were noticeably inclusive, poignant and truthful.

"This is more than a moment in time, for no matter how many people who came, if there is a million or less or more, the meaning of this day is not today; the meaning of this day will be determined by what we do tomorrow to create a real movement among our people," proclaimed the Minister as his captivated audience watched his image on the various jumbo screens spread out across the Mall. "The time has never been more ripe for a strategic relationship between the Black, Brown, Native American and the poor of this nation and the world."

He noted the inexcusable delayed response of the state, federal, and local government in helping victims of Hurricane Katrina and asked what lessons we were to learn from this tragedy. Minister Farrakhan warned that if we continue to keep our mouths in the kitchen of those who continuously harm us, we will never be fed.

The Millions More Movement brought us together so we could mark the progress since our last meeting and decide where we still need to go. Yes, several strides have been made in the last 10 years, but events like Hurricane Katrina demonstrate that there is still more to be done. Hopefully it won't be another 10 years before the next family reunion.

For more information on information and how to support the Millions More Movement visit www.millionsmoremovement.com.



Image by LaDonna LaGuerre

Coming Together Again: The Diaspora's Journey Back to Washington Kat Noel

On Sunday, Oct. 30, 2005, the Selma March of 1965 was re-enacted on the front steps of the First Church in Roxbury, Mass. Its purpose was to commemorate a significant event that helped propel the Civil Rights Movement. People of different walks of life- young and old, rich and poor- congregated peacefully on the church's steps and sought to address the importance of voting. Attending politicians included U.S. Senator John Kerry and Mayor Thomas M. Menino. Congressman John Lewis, a speaker at the event, encouraged the audience to register to vote and let their voices be heard through the ballot box. As an effort for the Black vote to be heard, the Selma march was marked by tremendous struggle as people risked their lives in an attempt to get the Voting Rights Act passed. Our ancestors fought for this right and attendees at this event felt the need to reiterate the importance of voting.

On Jan. 14, 1965, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. went to Selma, Ala. with the intention of persuading the Black residents of the town to register to vote, but he really wanted this message to spread throughout the entire South. Prior efforts were made by other organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), but they had little success. King's plans and actions increased awareness of the importance of voting and in turn, charged others to do so. Numerous individuals supported King by becoming registered voters and inspiring others to do the same. Unfortunately, out of these positive actions came negative reactions. People who wanted to register were being denied and were incarcerated.

To oppose the recent imprisonment of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) leader, James Orange, protestors gathered and commenced a march to the Perry County Jail where he was being detained. During the march on March 7, 1965, these protestors were violently attacked by state troopers and of the mass that were injured, a young boy and his mother were victims of this terrorism. Although his mother survived, Jimmy Lee was shot in the stomach and later died in the hospital several days later. However, out of a tragedy came a blessing. The death of Jimmy Lee inspired people to form a memorial service in his name and inspired the march from Selma to Montgomery on March 21-25, 1965. This march promoted and encouraged residents of Alabama to actively participate in their democracy by voting.

During the march, the name "Bloody Sunday" was given. Protestors were attacked by law enforcement officials as they were attempting to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Around 100 people were injured because of the severe beatings they encountered. The media coverage of this event ignited nationwide concern and brought aide to the marchers of Selma. Several days later, the march continued and the protestors successfully marched to Montgomery and Birmingham without any violent outbursts. In 1960, Alabama had only 66,000 African American registered voters but that number reached 250,000 in 1966 because of the Selma march.

Because of the blood, sweat and tears of our older generations, there is much we should be thankful for. But some say that not much have changed. There is a lack of voter participation from the African American demographic. The main reason for the name "Retracing the Struggle" was to promote the tremendous impact voting has on a society to those of the present and future generations.

Upon my interviews, the main message was that the youth are the ones that will greatly affect future change. Jacqueline Jones, an alumnus of Northeastern University, was the Brockton contact for this event. She said, "There is a need for people to vote because voting is power," and indicated that her primary reason for being participating in the march was to "reenergize the youth and inspire a new generation of voters."

One speaker, State Representative Gloria L. Fox, commented that "young people are getting busy... and should move beyond where our past leaders have taken us." She described how the movement is not over because the struggle still consists of violence, racism, [lack of] health care and disparity. She suggested that although people feel the movement has died down, young people, in high school and older, showed up and their presence is their footprint in the continuation of overcoming the struggle. Other speakers proclaimed that young people are "picking up the torch and taking knowledge to move us on."

This march has encouraged those of the new and old generations to collectively participate in promoting voting rights for all. People gave their lives trying to better the advancement of their people and culture. Now those that we look up to for inspiration are looking at us to continue the movement. Through history we have seen that group efforts can realize the visions that our former leaders have had. As one speaker mentioned, "it is now for the youth to serve as messengers for freedom and justice". My advice is that we realize the greatness of our voice and acknowledge our capabilities so that we can reinforce our rights and the rights of future generations.



Image by Margaret Kamara

A Commemoration March: Roxbury to the Boston Commons Marsha White



ReEmergence of the Boston Greeks

The Divine Nine And Historically Hispanic Fraternities And Sororities

Krisa Allen & Shantelle Anderson | Images by BriAnn Smith

Going generations back, young men and women have chosen to dedicate themselves and their time to various Greek organizations. Greek fraternities and sororities bring to mind thoughts of a lifelong commitment and public service. Many Greek organizations were established during the times when Blacks were being oppressed and, as a result, they played a major role in the social movements of the past and of today. Yet in this day and age, most students do not know much about Black history—and almost nothing about Greek history. Not only do the Greeks have to combat this lack of awareness, but they are also combating reemergence after years without a presence on Boston college campuses, as well as low undergraduate interest and misconceptions.

Black sororities and fraternities, also known as the "Divine Nine," and Latino/a Greeks in Boston cannot stress enough the importance of educating yourself prior to passing judgments or choosing an organization to join. Do the homework and research on what each of the organizations are about. Go to their events and learn first hand what they do and how they interact among each other and with non-Greeks. Each has a different fit and feel—one may not suit you as well as another, or Greek organizations may not be for you at all. Too many of us are forgetting our history, a history that Greek life is a part of. Please look forward to its rise. Support it. We have a legacy here; we need to nurture it.

The Men of the House: The Fraternities DIVINE NINE

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated

Founded 1906 at Cornell University, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated is the eldest of the Divine Nine. They were founded by nine men, the "Jewels of the Fraternity," because there was a great need for the building of bonds amongst African descendents in the U.S. At the time, most black people who attended universities dropped out after only a year as a result of the racially unwelcoming atmosphere. The Alphas began as a means to survive these trials and tribulations through building a strong sense of academia amongst themselves. Notable Alphas over time have been Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Frederick Douglas, Thurgood Marshall, Duke Ellington and W.E.B. DuBois.

Today Alpha Phi Alpha is one of the few frats that has remained thriving in Boston. They have two chapters, one in Boston and one in Cambridge. Although they recognize that membership is their lifeline for survival, don't expect them to seek you out. President of the Sigma chapter, Curtis Randall, emphasizes that a fraternity is a lifelong commitment. If a gentleman is interested in joining, it is his responsibility to reach out to the Alphas. There is no pledging or hazing involved, as some would believe. The brothers and the prospects decide when he is inducted into the fraternity. As far as membership numbers, Randall thinks they are growing. Yes it's almost as day and night compared to the South but Randall cleverly observed that simply put, there are a lot more black people

down South than there are up North. Furthermore it's a different outlook. He said, "Down there Black people know every Alpha by name and face... [the North] is not necessarily as close." But Randall said that it's not numbers that make the brotherhood but the brothers. They have a standard of intellectual ideas. As far as criticisms, Randall simply brushes them off saying, "If we weren't doing anything, people can't talk-We put ourselves out there in the spotlight. When you're trying to come out of mediocrity, people gonna say something." On a national level, Alpha Phi Alpha has focused on some remarkable projects including Project Alpha-an effort to educate young men on preventing teen pregnancy- and A Vote less People is a Hopeless People-an effort to register people to vote and educate them on the process. Look forward to their upcoming 90th Anniversary and their Black and Gold Ball. For more information please visit www.alphaphialpha.net or contact sigmachapter@17th-house.com

KRISA ALLEN

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated

I know what you're thinking, we all know the Kappas, they're right here on campus. Stereotypically, the Kappas are described as the pretty boys of the Divine Nine. However, the initiators of the fraternity built the foundation of the organization on achievement. When they began in 1911, times continued to be trying for the black man. The founders valued instilling their people with achievement higher than thought possible. Today, chapters extend all over U.S. The Boston chapter, the Chi Chapter, is a citywide chapter consisting of several undergraduate members from the Boston and Cambridge area. Currently brothers can be found at Boston College (BC), Harvard, Northeastern University and Berkley College of Music. The chapter is based at Boston University (BU) but there are no current brothers on their campus. However, the Kappa's have met with the BU Greek advisor and have been approved to program there. This is vital in efforts to start revitalizing their name and place in Boston.

Membership is generated through programs and events geared towards college students and community interest including community service and social gatherings. Kappa president, David Cadet, notes, "Why would we want or try to fit a label looking back at our struggle as minorities?" He describes his membership as diverse in numerous facets but they are linked through academics, involvement and ideal. Cadet adds, "We have already made it this far by going to college-now we must look beyond the path ahead of us and to the future." Kappa Alpha Psi is open to all cultures, backgrounds and religions. As far as recent achievements, they collaborated with Brothers About Change on an event entitled: "Brothers From Another Mother" and developed presentations on HIV/AIDS.

Why Kappas? Cadet described his experience with the Kappas as more lax compared to other Greeks he has dealt with. The Kappas stress that they are a non-hazing, non-pledging fraternity. It is suggested that interests attend orientation events to meet and get to know the members personally. Research is a must to find your way. Also, there are informationals once per semester. As far as changes in the fraternities dynamic Cadet commented, "I think we're in a good place" (in reference to the reactivation of many Greek organizations and more visibility). Cadet notes that the approach of Greeks has been changing in an effort to counter people's perceptions or bad experiences with Greeks. "The purpose is definitely the same but the way they carry it out could be different... Down South a lot of those folks come from a long line of family in Greek organizations. For instance, if a man down there was a Kappa, a lot of times his father may have been a Kappa and/or his grandfather. One, we don't have a lot of chapters up North and second of all people up North are more independent. People work their way up to where they want to go. So why join this organization or that organization? It's a good challenge for our Greek organization. It makes you want to step up your mentality more."

Coming up in December they're collaborating with Caribbean Student Union at Harvard. For future programming, the Kappas are really looking outside the box. Cadet was highly interested in a concert type event possibly featuring a gospel choir. For further questions, please email them at kapsi_chi@yahoo.com

KRISA ALLEN

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated

They live by the motto "Friendship is Essential to the Soul" and the principals of manhood, scholarship, perseverance and support. As the first fraternity on a historically black campus founded in 1911 at Howard University, Omega Psi Phi is respected by their peers and family. They aspire to reach the highest levels and demonstrate that in their daily lives. Donnie Perkins, longtime Omega man and the Dean/Director of Northeastern's Office of Affirmative Action, describes membership as men seeing more than "glitter and stepping." They value "growth as a people" and being "vibrant and as productive as possible." The Gamma Chapter is a citywide chapter in Boston. Their focus is directed towards mentoring new brothers in the organization, to connect, to build and to have a sense of history among other entities. Recently, they have operated a food pantry in Roxbury, organized blood drives and collaborated with other organizations such as the NAACP. Perkins added that we can look forward to seeing a growth in the Gamma chapter as it continues to rebuild (the chapter has only begun to be rebuilt because of the lack of numbers; currently undergraduate members reside with the graduate chapter). They also plan to continue building awareness on campuses, participating in more community and social action projects and creating partnerships with other fraternities and sororities.

Perkins commented that it is more than the organization examining you. You must go through self-examination. The Omegas uphold the highest of standards. He reminds us that a fraternity is a life-long commitment. Undergraduate brother, Christopher McCants, remarked, "Omega seeks no man." Through getting to know the brothers is how you move towards being invited. Because of this, the fraternity knows it will never be as big as other fraternities. Omegas are looking for those who are dedicated. As McCants noted, you can't "ride the coattails of your name." You think once you're in that the hard part is over, but it's when you're in that the hard part begins. You are always a representation of your organization. For McCants, he actually got to know the organization because his football coach who he admired and respected was an Omega man. For a lot of Omegas, it was the influence of a particular person that drew them to this organization. These men, sometimes described as intense, can be hard to reach but if you ask questions someone will guide you in the right direction.

If you decide Omegas are the brothers for you, you must first contact Donnie Perkins to express your interest. He can be reached at 617-373-2133. This is followed by a membership intake process.

KRISA ALLEN

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated was founded at Howard University in 1914. The Beta Alpha Chapter is a citywide chapter, which includes Northeastern University, Boston University, Wentworth Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston College and Harvard University- with a total of 15 members.

"For culture for service, for service for humanity," is the mission statement for Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated. It is something they all live by and strongly believe in. What sets Sigmas apart from other organizations that lay claim to similar values, is they have what Sigma undergraduate advisor, Aaron Wright, calls an "inclusive culture." By inclusive Aaron means that after they bring you in and you become a Sigma man they expect you to give back. Giving back is very important to them, not for the publicity and recognition, but because "that's what your culture is...you have a sense of pride," says Aaron. The Sigmas have a history of giving back to the community and standing up for the rights of Blacks. Sigma's also played an active role in the Civil Rights Movement with Benjamin Chavis as one of the organizers of the Million Man March and Huey Newton, the co-founder of the Black Panther Party.

With such a deep-rooted history one can confidently conclude that Sigma men are militant, organized, determined and brotherhood is very important to them. Sigma men continue to organize and fight for the rights of African Americans today in what Aaron refers to as the second stage of the Dark Ages. The Sigmas are no longer fighting the "grandfather clauses, its more so black men are killing themselves in the streets,

its more so we don't care our education is decreasing, it's more so we have no kind of political power." It is these issues that men of Phi Beta Sigma are working to change and in the process they are finding men who are able to compliment the aggressive, powerful and intelligent characteristics of their fraternity- and turning these men into Sigma Men. "You don't have to change any type of attitude or any type of style to become one of us...Nothing is more pleasing than to know someone actually took an effort to learn more about you organization and more about you," says Aaron, "they [the fraternity members] are like a whole fist and able to do some incredible things."

If you would like to find out more information on joining the movement and joining Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated visit their chapter website: <http://www.pbs1914.org>

SHANTELE ANDERSON

Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity Incorporated

The Phi Iota Alphas began here in Boston in 1996 yet stand as the oldest Latino fraternity, dating back to 1931. They have approximately eight undergraduates and several graduates currently at Boston University (BU), Northeastern and Harvard. However they're interested in expansion to the greater Boston area and areas as far as Andover, Amherst and Rhode Island. The purpose of the Phi Iotas is to "foster Pan-Americanism in the United States and Latin America." They view Latinos as "one people with a shared past and future." The fraternity embodies the ideals of empowering the Latino community as well as gearing programs and activities towards the appreciation, promotion, and preservation of Latin American culture.

"A Phi Iota Alpha man can be described as an exceptional individual instilled with a sense of professionalism and continually sporting a 'can-do attitude,'" says regional vice president Raul Fernandez. He further describes, "One of those [characteristics] is integrity and you don't have to be smart to have integrity. You don't have to have a strong cultural IQ to have integrity. But integrity is something you can't learn. It's either you have it or you don't." At first glance you may think that this fraternity is just the same as every other Greek, but they reach out to more than those people who are already interested in Greeks. Fernandez notes, "You don't necessarily want people who are interested in being in a fraternity. We want people who generally would never even think about joining a fraternity because we're so different." He goes on to explain that although there is the typical social aspect with the brotherhood, getting to know people and parties it's more about the academics and the culture.

As an interest, you need to learn about your own history and the history of all your line brothers, even the ones who are not Latino. Fernandez explains, "In the end you turn out to be an ambassador for the fraternity. How can you be an ambassador if you don't know about it?" Even if an interest decides the fraternity is not for him, it's still an opportunity to educate someone else. It's the idea of familia (family). That's what makes a familia, all these different types of people. Fernandez broke it down like this, "Maybe never again are you going to be around as many people like you than right here in college...and be able to organize and do something. Even though you may go on to your job and be the only one who looks like you on your floor or even on the block of suburbia that you reside in, you still come back to the fraternity."

For more information: visit www.phiota.org or please contact Raul Fernandez at r.fernandez@neu.edu or call (305) 401-5735

KRISA ALLEN

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Incorporated

Iota Phi Theta, the youngest fraternity of the Divine Nine, was founded in 1963 at Morgan State University. Northeastern University's Omicron chapter is currently inactive, although they do have one member, Fredson Gomes. Gomes however is currently collaborating with the Sigma Chapter at Boston University, until the Omicron chapter becomes active (hopefully in the Spring). The Iotas were founded on five principles: citizenship, scholarship, leadership, fidelity and brotherhood. Aside from these five principles Fredson feels their mission is "to uplift every single brother or every single person." Iotas feel that it is their obligation to not only uplift their Greek brothers, but humanity as a whole. They have a saying: "Whether you're my brother or you're not my brother; you're still my brother." Although the Iota membership numbers are increasing as a whole, Fredson says, "We don't want to roll deep. We want to have solid brothers who want to make a difference, who are about change and I think that's what sets us apart." Some notable Iota men are J. Keith Motley, the Chancellor at University of Massachusetts-Boston, and Shelly Stewart, the Vice President of Tyco.

The Iotas are very active in the community. They do the traditional walks and volunteer work for the homeless, however Fredson is currently working on a self-defense program to help children battle bullying, obesity and kidnapping through martial arts. Fredson recalls the day he became an Iota Man: "[Iota's are] not trying to make you a man. People who come in are already men. But they're trying to make you an Iota man. We're not here to, you know, fit into a certain mold. We stand apart." The Iotas are really into helping the community as opposed to being in the spotlight. Fredson says that he was attracted to the Iotas because he wanted "a vehicle where I could have the power to do things for people."

For more information on Iota Phi Theta email them at iotaomicon@gmail.com or visit <http://www.iotaphitheta.org>.

SHANTELE ANDERSON

Leading Ladies: The Sororities

DIVINE NINE

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, the first sorority of the Divine Nine, was founded in 1908 at Howard University by 20 "trailblazing" women. Iota Gamma is the name of the Northeastern University chapter and was established on June 8, 1974. Currently the chapter has four members. When Ethel Hedgeman Lyle, the visionary, conceived the idea for the organization, she saw it as "an instrument for enriching the social and intellectual aspects of college life." Since then the aim of Alpha Kappa Alpha has broadened to include servicing not only the college community but also the city, state, national, and international communities.

Jessica Hamilton, Vice President of the Iota Gamma Chapter, defines an Alpha Kappa Alpha woman as "smart, savvy, level-headed and well-rounded. She is a conscientious leader and concerned for the improvement of her community." These ideals are reflected through the chapter's members. Iota Gamma Chapter President, Whitney Montgomery, is an honors student preparing to go to law school. Their Treasurer, Kassandra Rodriguez, and their Secretary, Tawana Hinch, are both completing doctorates in pharmacy. Kassandra is also the President of Northeastern's National PanHellenic Council and Tawana is also the vice president of her class. From the beginning, high scholastic achievement and moral standards have always been vital characteristics of the Alpha Kappa Alpha ladies; as is reinforced and encouraged through their Annual Book Award. The scholarship is given to a Northeastern freshman and an upperclassman.

Aside from high scholastics and moral standards, Alpha Kappa Alpha's purpose values unity and friendship among college women, promoting an interest in college life in young girls and servicing the community. One of their national programs is The Ivy Reading AKAdemy, which assists children in developing a passion for reading early in their lives. What distinguishes Alpha Kappa Alpha from other sororities that may claim similar values is they were the first Greek-lettered organization established by Black women, therefore one may say that they set the standards for organizations that followed.

The role that Alpha Kappa Alpha plays in the community influences people to join their organization. This was the case for Jessica, who says, "In my personal life, I was blessed to have quite a few mentors who were members of Alpha Kappa Alpha and played a very influential role in my life. I would say I did not go about choosing a sorority, I just knew that I wanted to be like the women who played a positive role in my life and therefore Alpha Kappa Alpha was the only way to go." It is this positive influence and care for the community that adds to the uniqueness of the "Lovely Ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated." One of their founders, Anna Easter Brown, explained her belief in what constitutes the service of an Alpha Kappa Alpha woman. She said, "I am not a career

woman, but what greater career could one wish than to be an inspiration to her pupils? I have accomplished no great thing but I am steadily working toward a high moral standard and refined womanhood."

For more information about Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated, email them at AKAlotaGamma@yahoo.com.

SHANTELE ANDERSON

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated

Zeta Phi Beta was founded at Howard University in 1920. Theta Alpha is the citywide chapter in Boston, which currently only consists of two members. The sorority was founded on 4 main principles: sisterly love, finer womanhood, service, and scholarship. The organization also values their diversity and emphasize that there is no "particular standards" they go by in terms of membership, as long as a woman agrees with their principles. Ideline Delva, the chapter's secretary and treasurer says that the diversity aspect of Zeta Phi Beta, along with their welcoming nature was what influenced her decision to join this organization. Zetas also take pride in that they were the first sorority to charter a chapter in Africa, and they are also the only sorority constitutionally bound to a brother fraternity: Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated. Because the Theta Alpha chapter is so small, you may assume that it is hard for them to be very active in the community. This is far from the truth. The women of Theta Alpha chapter have been recognized for their great community service accomplishments: In 2003 their chapter was awarded "Most Successful Fundraising Efforts" for the March of Dimes, an organization that works to prevent birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. The chapter is also involved in other community service efforts, including; Walk for America, Walk for Diabetes, as well as work with the Greater Boston Food Bank and the Salvation Army.

Despite the lack of chapter members, Ideline is still very proud to be apart of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. It is events like the Zeta's international conference, called "Boule" that she says she cherishes the most. It was at her first "Boule" in 2004 that she realized: "Wow, I'm a Zeta!" "There were so many sorors over there, it was just full of Blue and White!" she says as she describes this memorable moment with a smile across her face. I can feel how much pride she has and how much she enjoys being a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

If you are interested in Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated visit the chapter's website, where you can find an interest form: www.geocities.com/zpb_thunderousthetaalpha.

SHANTELE ANDERSON

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated

In 1922 seven teachers in Indiana came together to form Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated for the purpose of "Greater Good, Greater Progress." The organization became a collegiate sorority in 1929 at Butler University, making Sigma Gamma Rho the only sorority in the Divine 9 to be founded on a historically white campus. Today the sorority has expanded its membership to include not only teachers but also, famous entertainers, actresses, and politicians. Despite the expansion in their membership the main focus of the organization remains on the youth and education. Wee Savers is one of their national programs used to encourage young people how and why to save money. They also hold a national essay contest for youth. The Kappa Nu chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho is a citywide chapter that includes members at Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute, Boston College, and University of Massachusetts-Boston. Currently there is one member at each of the colleges. Despite the fact that the Sigma's are one of the smallest sororities in the Divine 9, they are also one of the fastest growing with chapters in Germany, the Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas. Shauna Rigaud, advisor to the Kappa Nu chapter defines Sigma women as "women who have cut their own path...haven't stood to be apart of a special category. We run the gamut in different personalities and characteristics."

At colleges in the North, where there are many different types of student organizations, sororities and fraternities have to work harder here than their sorority sisters and fraternity brothers in the South. It is because of this Northern culture on college campuses that Shauna feels "doing community service is the best way to market Sigma Gamma Rho, along with the sisterly feeling." The sisterly feeling she talks about is the way she felt accepted at an informational she attended when she was an undergraduate at University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She recalls feeling that the women wanted to get to know her and that there was a sense of sisterhood in the room. She says: "We want people to really be like I can't get that anywhere else. I want to join a Greek-lettered organization because that's where I can get that at."

Look out for more information about Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated in the spring semester, especially during March when they will hold a Youth Symposium and have Sigma Week. Until then if you would like to get in touch with Sigma Gamma Rho you can email them at SGRho-Boston@gmail.com and you can also find more information on the Kappa Nu Chapter website: www.geocities.com/sgrhoboston.

SHANTELE ANDERSON

Alpha Rho Lambda Sorority Incorporated Alianza de Raices (Alliance of Races)

Alpha Rho Lambda Sorority Incorporated, Alianza de Raices, was founded on March 26, 1993 at Yale University. They pride themselves on being one of the first Latina sororities founded at an Ivy League University. Being such a young sorority, the ladies of Boston's Beta chapter, are creating what their founders envisioned when they first started the organization a reality everyday. The main focus of the organization then and now is academics. Alpha Rho Lambda has one of the highest GPA requirements, a 2.67, and if a soror goes below this she is placed on academic probation within the sorority and is not allowed to participate in events. Academic excellence is the first of their three tenants, the other two being community service and hermanidad (sisterhood). "Not only are we fortunate to be in college, but we have to look back where we came from. We didn't come from these rich families with secret money," explains Beta chapter President and Programming Chair Cindy Castro, in reference to the importance of community service. With three active undergrad members and two active grad members the Beta chapter was able to raise \$2,000 for New York's walk against Breast Cancer. The concept of hermanidad is important because the organization is so small that you get to know all of your sorors outside of your chapter on a one on one basis unlike bigger sororities.

"Even though we are so small, everyone knows us!" Cindy feels this is very important, especially in Boston, a place that Greeks consider "a very hard city." Not only because the cops are very strict about the membership intake process, but also because there is such a small amount of Latinas on college campuses that there are more citywide chapters than there are campus chapters. Cindy points out that now there are so many different student organizations on campuses for people to join that individuals who don't understand Greek life may feel like there is no need to go through a "silly process and pay for friendship" if they can easily be apart of these other organizations. Cindy and her sorors try to teach people what Greek life is all about. But in case you haven't had the chance to be educated by one of these wonderful ladies, Cindy offers you some food for thought: student organizations "end as soon as you're off from college. It's done. THIS...is a lifetime commitment!"

For more information on Alpha Rho Lambda Sorority Incorporated, Alianza de Raices you can email them at la_alianza_beta@yahoo.com or visit their website: www.alpharholambda.com. The Beta Chapter will celebrate their 10-year anniversary with Alpha Rho week in the spring. Also during the spring they will hold two informational sessions and their Annual Cultural Show at MIT.

SHANTELE ANDERSON



The Men of the House: The Fraternities

Aaron Wright, Alex Reyes, Habib Jalloh, David Cadet, Fredson Gomes,
Raul Fernandez, Christopher McCants, Brian Dixon



Leading Ladies: The Sororities

Ideline Delva, Cindy Castro, Jessica Hamilton, Kassandra Rodriguez, Janet Allen



Aaron Wright, Ideline Delva, Fredson Gomes, David Cadet, Jessica Hamilton, Raul Fernandez, Cindy Castro, Habib Jalloh, Janet Allen, Brian Dixon, Kassandra Rodriguez, Christopher McCants, Alex Reyes





Sistahs by Sandy Milord

What All the Fuss is About

Breaking Bread: A DAY FOR US

Sandy Milord

Don't you find it common among universities to never see a conference specifically targeted toward women of color? Have you ever had the choice to enroll in a course that depicted the issues these women face on a day to day basis? In history, are these women overlooked in our American culture? The issue of whether women of color are overlooked is all too common. This must be stopped. Barriers still exist in our society that must be broken down because, it is just that, "OUR" society—whether one chooses to accept that or not.

Robin Chandler is a professor in the African American studies department and is the first African American director of Northeastern University's Women's Studies Department. Professor Chandler, along with other members of the women's studies department, came together to create a conference that dealt with issues women of color face on a day to day basis. "Breaking Bread: A Day for Us," as the conference was entitled, took place on September 24, 2005. Over 100 women of Asian, African, Latin and Middle Eastern descent attended and joined hands in prayer. A sense of togetherness and unity filled the air.

Because the conference would be dealing with women of color, the flyer for the event read: "Women of Color Only". This phrase caused a tremendous reaction and was followed by tons of controversy. Before the actual event took place, a Student Government Association (SGA) representative felt as though this conference went against the university policy

that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race and wanted to be admitted into the conference.

In public statement released about the issue President Freeland said hosting an event which excluded anyone is, "simply not consistent with the university's Equal Opportunity Policy. It is also antithetical to our values and to what Northeastern stands for."

President Freeland's response to the issue emphasized the importance of diversity on campus and criticized the Women's Studies program for their attempt to host an event for women of color only.

This SGA representative was a white female who wanted to attend the conference to understand the issues that women of color face. However, some believe she was there to make a point that discrimination should not take place.

"I didn't feel the event was exclusionary at all. No one was turned away, for the women that were not women of color were welcomed and were involved in the discussion," said Marly Pierre Louis, a senior criminal justice major. "Their opinions were asked and their opinions were valued. I didn't feel that anybody was excluded."

What the SGA representative failed to understand was that white females in the women's studies department helped to bring about this conference. There were even two white females who were helping the guests settle in.

Because of the lack of researching into it, a storm of chaos formed around Professor Chandler and this event. There were interviews regarding this event with Professor Chandler, from which her words were largely misconstrued. As a result of people taking this event the wrong way, Chandler has received various hate mail and ridicule. How quickly people forget that it was not only Chandler who created and hosted this event!

Fox News' Wendy McElroy, author of the article entitled, *A White Oppressor? Who Me?*, which misconstrued much of the details of the conference, making Chandler look like a racist, sent the misunderstanding into a whole new playing field. The issue turned from being a campus-based situation to a national headline.

"It was brought up only one time. And the question that was asked was, why did they feel the need to be there, what were they looking for, what were they trying to learn? No one answered the question and then it was left alone," said Pierre Louis. "...If she was humiliated I would imagine that she wouldn't stay, that she would leave, or she would stand up for herself in some way, but she was laughing, she was enjoying herself, I don't see that she was humiliated at all."

I attended this event and there was clearly no indication of anyone humiliated at any instance during the duration of the conference. I didn't even know that there was a white female in the room until she introduced herself later on in the first session.

The NU News reported Professor Chandler as saying, "Only one

white female student showed up and I welcomed her anyway, in addition to telling the audience to conduct themselves with integrity even though the presence of a white woman was unwelcome."

As an individual who attended the event I know there was never an instance in which anything to that extent was stated by any of the attendees or organizers. The primary goal of this meeting was to implement a course which dealt with and discussed women of color, a topic that is increasingly unseen in history and contemporary times.

"We have been invited to the table but our offerings have been denied," said Dr. Elizabeth Cadly. "It's unfortunate that an event meant to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Northeastern Women's Studies Department was unfortunately stained by such controversy."

Despite all the controversy, what we must force ourselves to ask is whether Professor Chandler and her associates were wrong in trying to bring the gap between women of color, who are rarely catered to and often overlooked. Although the session did not run as planned with women of color only, attendees said they enjoyed the experience.

"I would absolutely attend another event like this. I really hope they have another one because I feel like his one was the beginning to a very therapeutic, healing type of process. I think that it's very necessary," said Pierre Louis. "People were actually crying there. People were very much affected. It's obvious that this event was very much needed, I hope that this controversy doesn't stop it from happening again."

RoundTable

The Onyx's RoundTable is an open and respectful discussion about controversial topics



The DOUBLE **Minority**

Christine: Ok, so we're here today to talk about what it's like to be a minority within a minority – or to be non-heterosexual and then a member of a racial minority. And so basically, the *original title we chose for this Roundtable was Double Burden, and I just wanted to know, first of all, what do you guys think of the title? Do you think it's very appropriate? Is it reflective of what a lot of minority, non-heterosexual people go through?

Jhanea: Um, I think it's an appropriate title for the experience of some people. But it's not like a blanket kinda thing because there are some minority homosexuals that have no problem with their race or don't even identify with being a minority, you know? They were raised in the suburbs somewhere, wherever, and their family's completely fine with it and they didn't have to deal with both problems. I think the title is fitting and I think it is appropriate, but I just wouldn't apply it to the whole minority homosexual experience because for some people it is a double burden – for others, they don't really identify with one being a burden.



Jhanea Williams

Edwin: Yea, I agree with her. I've never had to consider my race a burden or my sexuality a burden, so I guess I'm lucky for that...but there are a lot of people who have.

Christine: Do either one of you have friends that did have a really difficult time coming out?

Edwin and Jhanea: Yea

Jhanea: Um, I mean, I had a difficult time coming out myself. It wasn't like, the worst or like, a crazy horror story, but I have had friends that have had the worst time possible like, suicide attempts and everything. And then I've had people that've come out perfectly fine and were happy. And then I've had people that've come

out in the middle. I, like, I know a little bit of everything so, but I mean, I had my own share of hardships I guess so...

Christine: Do you think that was more of a their parents thought it was a moral thing? Or do you think maybe it was – Well I know at least in the black community, it's very church oriented so it's more like you grow up knowing from the Bible that homosexuality is wrong...So then it's like, how dare you come into the house you know, doing something that blatantly –

Edwin: Yea, no it was definitely a moral thing. Um, it was definitely a moral thing. I actually have a friend who almost got thrown out of his house and his parents are very, very extreme Catholics. They're Spanish.

Jhanea: I mean it's a moral thing but then it's a parent thing cuz like, my mother for example, her problem was it's against the laws of the Bible – this is against your religion, your God does not approve. And then later, I realized in certain conversations that it was also a guilt thing. My mother was like wait, is this my fault? Did I do this? How did my child come out this way living in this household that I build for her? You know? So it's like morals and then it's just like what did I do wrong sorta kinda so...it's a little bit of both that causes them to react the way they do.

Christine: Do you think the reaction differs among cultures? For instance, ok, I was at the CSO meeting last night doing "research" because they were talkin about homosexuality in the Caribbean...And they were saying there're some islands there where they have very blatant anti-gay laws that prohibit a lot of things. And the people there like the laws. The general sentiment is that they want homosexuality banned. I mean, I don't know necessarily what nationalities, specifically you are, but even from your friends, have you seen a difference in reaction among the minority cultures?

Edwin: I'm Puerto Rican and I noticed that in my culture, it's something that, well, not per say in New York, but back on the island, it's something that you don't talk about. It's something that you know is there and you're fine with it, but as long as nobody really talks about it, it's ok. Yea, it's –

Jhanea: It's very taboo.

Edwin: Yea! Like, you don't talk about it...We know, but just don't act it, you know -- quote on quote "act it" and –

Christine: Just kinda keep it in a corner...?

Edwin: Yea...which then leads to the whole down low thing...

Christine: Yea, ok speaking of the down low, how do you feel about the down low?

Edwin: I hate the down low.

Jhanea: [laughing] Before, [laughing] before I answer that, I will say, I think it differs in cultures or different ethnic groups. Like I'm African-American and in my community – in my race, it's like a problem, you don't talk about it. But because, personally, I think that like, "island" minorities like Puerto Ricans and Dominicans and Cape Verdeans and Haitians and Jamaicans, whatever, like, they happen to be more religious than the African-American community, like, we're Americanized.

Christine: Yea.

Jhanea: Like, we're religious and you know, we got our Baptist goin on but they take it to a whole different level, and so I think they tend to be more hush hush about it/don't say anything about it than the African-American community. Like, I, I have friends that are of you know, island decent or whatever and their parents are like oh hell no...like, callin them all kinds of names and everything else and my family's just like "Wait, what? Why? Why are you doing this?" Whereas, my friend's family are like "No, we're going to beat it out of you – like, this got to go." So, I definitely think it differs between different cultures or like, different races of minorities.

Edwin: I think it's uh, a big generation gap too.



Edwin Figuero

Edwin: My parents – And it also has to do with the way your parents got brought up. Like, my mom went to college and my grandparents graduated high school, which is kinda like a big thing cuz a lot of a lot of people's parents – grandparents, excuse me, went to like 3rd grade or something. But, it all depends on how you were brought up cuz for example, now in Puerto Rico, alright, the older people see it as a bit of a problem...but they're gonna die out –

[Group Laughter]

Edwin: [laughing] No like, seriously, they're gonna die soon. But a lot of the young people are perfectly fine with it. And that's why there's so many metrosexuals in Puerto Rico and in the Dominican Republic. That's why the whole like, European market has taken over there when it comes to jeans, when it comes to pretty much anything.

Jhanea: Yea, I think the younger generations – like our generation, maybe our parents' generation – like the younger half of it, and then definitely our children, are going to be raised to see homosexuality and therefore, they're going to be okay with it. Like, I think our older generations – our parents, our grandparents, didn't see it. It wasn't on the forefront; it was you know, that American family or that whatever kind of traditional family with the husband, the wife, the children, the whatever. It's wasn't all over tv. It wasn't all over the news. It wasn't anywhere. It wasn't okay. Now, we have tv shows. We have the L word. We have so-and-so over here.

Edwin: Queer as Folk.

Jhanea: Yea, you know, Queer as Folk, know what I mean? ...I think as long as society keeps putting it out there, our generation, the lower half of our parent's generation, and then definitely our children, are gonna be more okay with it....because, its here and it's blatant and –

Edwin: And it's always been there.

Jhanea: Yea but now it's like, here, publicly.

Christine: Ok, so then, now...getting back to the other question...You guys are so comfortable and open; you came to the discussion...how do you feel about the down low? Cuz, I know that's another taboo...

Edwin: Um, "on the down low" can mean a lot of different things. It can mean you are living a double life or at the same, it can mean that you are still in the closet. And, it's okay to still be in the closet sometimes. Because, you know, I was in the closet for a while too; I was confused for a while. I was like, you know, was I born this way? Is this something I can get over? But, there's a difference between being that way and having...a completely different life, like, having a girlfriend or a family, and then lying to your wife, and sleeping with a guy.

Christine: Yea.

Edwin: Or if it's the woman's case, sleeping with another woman.

Christine: Right.

Jhanea: Mhm.

Edwin: So that's, that's when there's a problem. And I think that that's not even a whole sexuality problem. That's a moral problem. Like, how are you gonna lie to –

Christine: This is true.

Edwin: How are you gonna lie to your wife? How are you gonna lie to your kids? How are you gonna lie to...your husband?

Christine: Or even, yourself.

Edwin: Or even to yourself! And it's kind of disturbing because it's been taken to a level where you have an established household already. You have kids. You have a "committed" relationship yet, you're still in denial...and you're just screwed up.

[Group Laughter]

Edwin: You know?

Jhanea: I mean, I agree with what he's saying about how being on the down low is morally wrong, but before I even get into that, like, the problem that I have with the men on the down low, especially cuz you know, that's jus America's newest thing, is like, [they] are giving the homosexual community a bad name. And (to Christine) I don't mean to get on you for this, but you're using the term "down low" like, very...blanket. And like [Edwin] said, that only applies to like, a certain amount of people. There is a huge difference between being on the down low or being in the closet or not being sure of or still decided or like, being you know, bi-curious or whatever. But, America at this point is like, anybody that's not open is on the down low.

Edwin: And that's not the way that is.

Jhanea: And that's so not true. Like, like he said, being on the down low is living another life. Like, you're literally hiding your sexuality from everybody that you love and that you care about or everybody that you know [who] knows everything else about you. You're hiding it from them. And, you're lying to somebody. You're lying to some people. You're lying to yourself. You're putting people at risk emotionally, physically, whatever. And, I personally don't think it's okay. But at the same time, playing devil's advocate sorta kinda, you also have to take into consideration what these people are going through. Because there's a reason why they're hiding it. There's a reason – they, they must feel like somewhere in their life that like, they have to hide this cuz it's okay by here, it's okay by there ---

Christine: That was the next question.

Jhanea: So they're questioning it. But as far as people in the closet are concerned – those people that are still tryna figure it out, still tryna come to terms with it, I think that's slightly different. And, I...I think that's okay; that's better. Cuz I mean, you gotta get wit it. You gotta get comfortable with it before you present to anybody that could not be comfortable with it. Because if you're not 100% ok with it, and you throw it out there to somebody and they're like oh no, n-n-n-no that's just gonna mess you all up. So like, or like, you know, if you're in the closet and you're on the down low, sorta kinda, like...I could, I could make an argument for –

Christine: So they overlap...

Jhanea: Like they over – like they can overlap. Like, because when I was coming out, I was in the closet, and for me, the most important person to know was my mother. That is my family. That is my everything. That was the person that needed to know but because I wasn't ready to tell her because I was still questioning it, I was on the down low. Meaning, I was sorta kinda living a double lifestyle because I still had a boyfriend, but I was you know, talking to young ladies. My mother didn't know – none of my friends knew, but my friends couldn't know because that loyalty to tell my mother first was there. So it was it was like I was living a double lifestyle while I was in the closet because I wasn't comfortable enough to come out with it. So, I mean, I think the terms or the conditions can overlap in so many different ways, but just blatantly being on the down low is morally jus...no...like, you got to do something about that.

Edwin: Eventually, you really do have to do something about it.

Jhanea: You really do.

Edwin: Before you're too deep in the hole.

Jhanea: Exactly.

Edwin: Before you got some kiiiiiiiiids and—

[Group Laughter]

Jhanea: Like, you really gon' have to figure that out.

Edwin: Yea

Jhanea: And if you – if you're already in a marriage, if you're already in a relationship and one morning you wake up and you're like ohhh shit I like somebody of the same sex, Ima need you to have enough love and care for the person you're with to go speak on that.

Edwin: Yea.

Jhanea: Instead of like, creepin – like, it's cheating! You know what I mean?

Edwin: It is cheating, yea.

Jhanea: Being on the down low is cheating, which, again, steps into that moral problem. But, it's like, not only are you cheating, but you're making the gay community look bad...so we're gonna need you to not. Thanks. [laughing] Like, no. Edwin: And another thing is the term "down low," for some reason is revolving around the Black community and the Hispanic community – more among the Black community. And, it's like what, white people ain't down low? Like --

Jhanea: Exactly.

Edwin: There aren't any white people in the closet?

Jhanea: Exactly. But see again, that's America. America has to apply everything that it puts out there to someone.

Edwin: Yea.

Jhanea: And everything that we market has to be applied to one person because if you put to everybody, nobody identifies, and nobody can attack the next person. You know what I mean? Like, if you say "all of America is on the down low," America's not gonna pump that up because it's like wait, I'm not gonna attack myself.

Edwin: Yea.

Jhanea: ...But if you put it on one person, then you can market it very well. You can apply it to everything else that's already associated with that person or those group of people, and then that gives somebody else the opportunity to pick on those people. And, of course, it generates that way and it gets hyped and big because I can -- oh, "I'm not on the down low, but those, those black men, oh they are." You know? Like, you can run with it now so --

Edwin: And that, again, creates more separatism and more racism within a community, within the gay community.

Jhanea: Mhm!

Edwin: Like, it, it creates a lot of identities. It creates the Abercrombie and Fitch jockey gay guy.

Jhanea: [laughing] It so does!

Edwin: It creates the Hispanic flaming faggot --

Jhanea: Oh my God! YES, YES, YES.

Edwin: --that you see walking down the street. It creates, the "homothug."

Jhanea: Yea --oh, Gawwwwd!

Edwin: It creates that, you know?

Jhanea: Yes.

Christine: And speaking of the different, um, within the minority [gay] communities, the different things...Do you think you identify with both equally - your race and your sexuality? Or do you think one comes first. Like, (to Jhanea) you know how some people'll say that you can walk into a room as a black woman, but people aren't going to see you as a woman first--they're going to see you as a black woman?

Jhanea: Mhm.

Christine: When you (to Edwin now also) look at yourself, when you think of yourself, do you identify first with -- ok, I'm gay/bisexual/whatever? Or do you think I'm Latino, I'm Black, I'm--

Edwin: No. I think of myself as Latino first. Cuz, I doubt you think of yourself -- "I'm straight." I'm going to the meeting, I'm straight! --

[Group Laughter]

Edwin: -- And then, I'm black.

Jhanea: And then I'm everything else.

Edwin: I mean this is -- that's when this comes into play: Like, this wasn't something I chose. This is just the way I was born -- this is genetics. This is the way God made me, you know? Like, I was born this way -- I am this way; this is me naturally. My identity is Hispanic; I am Puerto Rican. But, then when I have to defend my gay rights, then I say: "I'm gay. I'm a faggot." You know?

[Jhanea nods, laughing]

Jhanea: Um, I don't know. I mean, earlier in my whole homosexual lifestyle, I -- when I was -- After, I'd come out and admitted it to myself and some other people...my mother, everything I did was like lesbian, lesbian, lesbian, homosexual, get the rainbow flag out. Like, I pumped it. Like, I was homosexual before I was anything else because I wanted everybody to know that I was serious. Like, I identified with myself as "I like women," ya know? And at the time, I was real hardcore bisexual and so like, it wasn't an identity crisis, don't get it twisted....cuz I know who I am all hours of the day--

[Edwin chuckles]

Jhanea: -- just happened to lean heavier on this homosexual part because it was the newest thing to my life. But at the same time, at this point it's like, when I think of myself, I think great, ok, I think architecture student; I think young lady; I think leader. I don't identify with my race, my nationality, my sexuality first -- I identify with my person, like, and what I am, and what I'm about. Like when I think of myself, generally speaking, at any point and time of my life, except when I was all excited about being comfortable about being out--

Edwin: Yea.

Jhanea: --I think of how the people around me see me. And granted, there are people on this campus that know I'm black -- half of them think I'm Spanish, but--

[Group Laughter]

Jhanea: They see me and they think I'm whatever race I am, and some of them see me and they think I'm gay, but besides that, they think, Nea. "Oh that's Nea, the architecture major. That's Nea the Legacy 2000 mentor. That's Nea, the poet." Like, that's the way I identify myself -- with who I am. I don't worry about who I'm sleepin with and what color I am or they are. Like, that's so...

Edwin: It's almost like there's no time for that.

Jhanea: Yea! Like, that's so 5th and 6th tier to me. Like, they're suh -mm...Well, I guess if I were to consider it first, my sexuality – I've become so comfortable with it and this point to where it's—

Edwin: You don't even notice it.

Jhanea: Like it's just nature. But there are people that feel – especially minorities – well, obviously we're talking about minorities...but like, because society is so like, not 100% comfortable with this whole homosexual thing, and I – this may apply to every race of people, but I know minorities...There are minorities that will introduce themselves as their name, as their profession, as their trade, as their talent or whatever—

Edwin: And then the "by the way."

Jhanea: –"And by the WAY, I'm a lesbian. By the way, I'm homosexual." Whatever, however they wanna call themselves because they feel like that employer or that potential co-worker or that professor or that peer is not going to accept them if they find it out later. Like, they're not going to accept it period, but they'd rather tell them now—

Edwin: Yes.

Jhanea: –and get it out the way, and see if they're okay with it, instead of going into this new position-situation "lying" to this person. They feel like they're misleading them because they don't automatically state their sexuality and they know - they're under the assumption that the other person is straight because you know, "that's what everybody is" so they feel like, the need to put that out there with their name. It's like "Jhanea D. Williams, lesbian."

Edwin: Mhm. [nods in agreement]

Christine: Ok, and then, I guess just lastly, do you have anything you would definitely want to say to everyone on campus that's reading this article right now, whether they're straight, bi, gay... transvestite, transgender, anything—

Edwin: We have transvestites on campus?

Christine: I don't know.

Jhanea: We must.

Edwin: Yea, we probably do.

Jhanea: Um, the only thing I can say is like, seriously, work on – and this is for anybody like [Christine] said, is work on being comfortable with yourself. Work on being okay with who you are and who you're not, what you're into and what you're not into. Get your comfort zone together. Love, understand, appreciate yourself...and leave the world alone. Like, why are you worried about the next person? And why are you worried about who and what the next person is and what it is that they're doin and what it is that they're not doin? More importantly, why are you worried

about what the next person thinks of you? If you are okay with whom you are, and you accept it, and you understand it, you sittin easy wit it, then be easy wit it, and let it be what it is.

Edwin: I couldn't have put it better myself. I really couldn't have. I mean, man, just respect one another, worry about what you're doin, worry about graduating, like—

Jhanea: Please!

Edwin: You know? Um—

Jhanea: [laughing] Get yo' GPA up.

Edwin: Just, you know, work on yourself. Definitely establish your comfort zone.

Jhanea: Please.

Edwin: Be comfortable with yourself.

Jhanea: Please.

Edwin: Because, if you're not comfortable with yourself, you're not gonna get anywhere. You're always gonna try and prove something to somebody—

Jhanea: Exactly.

Edwin: –or impress somebody.

Jhanea: You're never gonna have the energy or the time to focus on the things that are more important such as your academics, such as your social progression, such as your self-development, because you're too busy trying to impress this person, that's never going to be impressed by you. You're tryna please this person that's never going to be pleased. And, even if they are pleased, once they are, you'll realize oh wait that doesn't matter because I'm still not happy. It makes no sense.

Edwin: Yea. I don't know. Just, like, enjoy life. Life is a beautiful thing so just enjoy it. Be respectful of yourself and of others.

Jhanea: (to Edwin) Now, right here I just wanna tell you that if one of my friends were here, he would have to you that you are so gay.

[Edwin laughs]

Jhanea: (imitates) Life is beautiful. Life and joy—It's great. He woulda been like "iiiiii you are SO gay!!!" Like he, really would've said it to you. I just had to tell you that.

Edwin: That's funny.

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